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Carbondalers Unite To Present Building Completed in 1894

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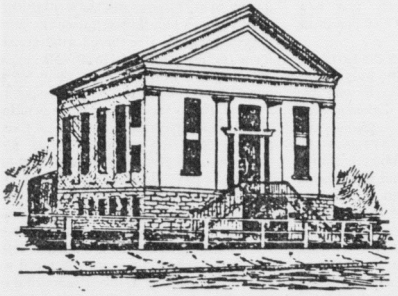
HISTORICAL FIGURE – S. Robert Powell, president of the Committee To Restore Carbondale City Hall, is shown on the streets of the city during the recent Pioneer Days attempting to raise interest in the project. Thus far, the Committee has provided the funds to repair the clock in the tower of City Hall.



FIRST CITY HALL – The original Carbondale City Hall was constructed out of wood in 1852. The Greek Revival building served until it burned down in 1859. To replace it, the town built the structure which currently stands as the two-story wing of the present City Hall.

By KEVIN O'HARA

In many towns and cities throughout this nation, a single public building often stands as the strongest link between that area and its past. Frequently, this dominant structure is a courthouse or city hall, built during the period of greatest vitality in that locale's history. So it is with Carbondale.

The current Carbondale City Hall, located in the center of town on Main Street, is a Romanesque Revival-style building, consisting of a tower, a three-story wing and a two-story wing. The tower and three-story wing were built at the height of Carbondale's ascendancy as a coal mining center in the 1890's. The two-story part was already in existence, having been built in 1859 to serve as the city's second city hall. The first municipal building had been a wooden structure that had been destroyed by a fire that year

Carbondale, which was incorporated in 1851, lived with boom times during the Nineteenth Century. In 1892, the city fathers decided that the existing city hall was no longer adequate or grand enough for their town. Binghamton architect Truman Lacey submitted the design for a building that reflected the town's exalted view of itself and its aspirations. Construction began that year and was completed by 1894. Lacey's plan built the ornate tower and three-story wing out of brick and bluestone, and attached the old city hall to the new construction after adding a different roof to it. The completed edifice has remained in continuous use to this day.

However, the building has fallen upon hard times. A lack of upkeep over the years has lead to deterioration in certain parts of the structure. This situation so alarmed some of the local citizenry that they banded together and formed the Committee To Restore Carbondale City Hall, Inc. Spearheaded by S. Robert Powell, the group decided to make its first priority something that would be highly visible to the entire community. "We set out to fix the clock in the tower, which hadn't worked for many years," says Powell.

Through a strenuous effort, the Committee came up with $3,000 which went to repair the clock, illuminate it and restore its chimes to working order. The result was widely praised by many Carbondale residents.

"When we were raising funds, many people asked, 'Why isn't the City fixing it?'. The city fathers said they simply did not have sufficient funds." The Committee has been extremely careful to avoid any political ties. Powell makes clear, "Our only priority is the building. We are trying to do for the building what should be done for the building and we leave the political questions to the voters at the polls."

Right now, the Committee is deep into an effort to raise sufficient funds to repair several badly damaged sections of the roof. In the past, the City has only repaired the areas of the roof that were over currently occupied parts of the building. Water damage has weakened a section of the roof of the two-story wing and the roof of the tower itself. It is felt that at least $15,000 will be needed to fix these two areas.

But the Committee's commitment to Carbondale's City Hall goes beyond that immediate project. In the long range, they would like to clean the exterior of the